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SUBJECT: MGLB01: LEBANON MONITORING GROUP SITUATION

REPORT NO. 11

CLASSIFIED BY: KATHERINE BRUCKER, SENIOR WATCH OFFICER,
S/ES-O, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

CABINET RETRACTS ANTI-HIZBALLAH MEASURES

¶1. (SBU) Embassy Beirut reports Interior Minister Aridi announced the reversal of the decisions to fire the airport security chief and to declare Hizballah's fiber optics network illegal after a five-hour meeting. The Lebanon desk comments this was expected, and is a tactical move to show flexibility as Arab League-mediated negotiations begin. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail, Ops/Lebanon desk telcon, Reuters)

ARAB LEAGUE TO REMAIN IN BEIRUT MAY 15

¶2. (C) The Lebanon desk notes the Arab League delegation plans to meet again with PM Siniora, but is not scheduled to meet with Hizballah leader Nasrallah. The desk comments the March 14 coalition is hesitant about holding talks in Doha, and it is unclear whether the negotiations will cover Hizballah's armed status. (Ops/Lebanon desk telcon)

MIXED LEBANESE REACTION TO ARAB LEAGUE MEETINGS

¶3. (U) Free Patriotic Movement leader Aoun said talks with the delegation were "honest," and "there are foreign forces who do not want a solution." (NowLebanon.com)

¶4. (U) Former President Gemayel welcomed the Arab League initiative, but said talks should not begin until the Lebanese people could be reassured the events of the past week would not recur. (NowLebanon.com)

¶5. (U) Lebanese Forces leader Geagea said his meeting was "productive," but that additional talks should take place in Lebanon, not Qatar. (NowLebanon.com)

HIZBALLAH INSTALLING PERMANENT
GATES ON AIRPORT ROADS

¶6. (C) Embassy Beirut notes the gates will allow Hizballah to open and close the roads to Beirut International Airport at will. (Beirut 686)

¶7. (U) Minimize considered.
RICE